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STATEMENT BY COUNCILMAN-AT-LARGE DONALD TUCKER

RE: ESSEX COUNTY COLLEGE OPEN ENROLLMENT POLICY

FEBRUARY 8, 1983

President Yamba has recently provided members of the City Council and others with "a compilation of data" regarding open enrollment at Essex County College.

Of course, this selective compilation constitutes essentially a rationale for the denial of open enrollment as he has advocated and is based on documents, studies, and fiscal reports to which we have not yet had access. Also, it should be noted his statement lacks discussion of the specific methodology and testing criteria by which it is proposed Essex County College begin to shut the doors of opportunity to those in need.

But, solely on the basis of this brief written statement and on the basis of our own knowledge of relevant history, let us offer these pertinent points:

My concern for the preservation of open enrollment at E.C.C. is based not only on a mandate to serve the best interests of Newark, but also on my continuing involvement in the Civil Rights Movement.

Civil rights to me means the guarantee of the full, free, and fair right of all citizens to succeed or fail as their individual abilities and interests dictate--that is, equal opportunity for all.

The open door policy of public higher education is critical to equal opportunity in America, in New Jersey, and in Newark. This issue is so vital that it transcends personalities and politics. The positions espoused by President Yamba and myself are only significant in so far as they shed light on the relative merits of open enrollment.

State colleges from the Mid-West to the Far-West successfully implemented open enrollment policies decades before New Jersey and they continue to do so. And no responsible observer of American colleges would suggest that the State University systems of Michigan, Wisconsin, or California are inferior because of these policies. The City University of New York (C.U.N.Y.) was also a pioneer in open enrollment.

It seems particularly ironic that proposals to curtail open enrollment at E.C.C. surface now after the college has just recently received its official accreditation from the Middle States Conference.

Thus, Essex County College joins the ranks of 1,100 accredited two-year community colleges in America whose policies of inviting all who could profit from the educational experience to enroll more than fifty percent of all undergraduates, or approximately four (4) million students.

[See: Excellence and the Open Door: An Essential Partnership, N.J. Department of Higher Education, Trenton, N.J., 1979; and Statewide Planning in Higher Education, D. Kent Halstead (for the U.S. Department of Health, Education & Welfare), Washington, D.C. 1974.]

Among the selected facts as presented, it is noted that some disadvantaged students enrolled at Essex County College in one or more remedial programs suffer a high drop out rate or a high "failure" rate. But isn't it

precisely those students who display sufficient motivation to overcome these obstacles for which Essex County College was originally established. If the glass is half-empty, it is also half-full.

Indeed, let us not forget the mission of Essex County College as defined in policy statements of the N.J. Board of Higher Education. Here are pertinent excerpts from such statements:

FROM THE 1974 PHASE II MASTER PLAN STATEMENT:

"The community colleges of New Jersey have the following major missions:

"To be the open door to higher education in New Jersey, with a particular obligation to people who are uncertain about their educational interests or abilities and want to explore a variety of occupational and academic programs. In higher education this mission shall be reserved for the county community colleges. To carry it out, the colleges must have a sufficient mix of occupational and liberal arts programs and must offer students a broad array of counseling and tutorial services. This will assist people of all ages in broadening their skills and in raising the level of their aspirations and accomplishments as far as their abilities and interest will take them...

"To continue their major role of serving their communities. Their various academic programs are expected to be closely related to the needs of the local community... In addition, they should enrich the communities' cultural life through short courses, special programs, and a variety of formal and informal educational offerings. In this effort, they should give particular attention to programs for minority groups and residents of inner cities, to programs for older adults, and to programs that help resolve diverse and complex community problems....

"A community college should be accessible to every student of New Jersey....

"RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPLEMENTING MISSIONS AND GOALS:

"TO BE THE OPEN DOOR. Through a wide variety of creative and innovative programs, the community colleges should make educational opportunities available to every citizen of New Jersey. They are crucial elements in realizing

the Board of Higher Education's pledge that each individual should have the opportunity to be educated to the height of his potential.

"In order to carry out this mission, every community college in New Jersey has the responsibility within the limits of facilities to admit to some occupational, academic, or remedial program any motivated person who is a high school graduate, who is the possessor of an equivalency certificate, or who, if not in school, is eighteen years of age or older. This will ensure that students have an adequate opportunity to compensate for previous educational deficiencies and that their programs will encourage upward mobility of educational aspirations and accomplishments. Occupational programs must be offered in a coordinated framework through which qualified and motivated students can advance. Academic programs must be free of arbitrary entrance and graduation requirements, so that students can move smoothly toward an associate's and later a bachelor's degree. Above all, the community college ought to be a place where each student can explore the variety and depth of his interests and skills.

"Counseling and guidance, important at all colleges, are particularly necessary in community colleges. Here young people and adults should be able to secure personal and qualified help in planning their futures....

"MISSION FOR HIGHER EDUCATION IN NEWARK

"In order to become one of New Jersey's two major public university centers, the Newark complex should institute large-scale undergraduate and graduate programs, especially in urban-oriented and professional studies, and should provide educational services to the disadvantaged. This general statement of mission implies the following more specific missions:....

"To make suitable educational services available to the disadvantaged residents of Newark and its surrounding areas....

"It should be realized that there are special costs for public colleges located in cities. Land is expensive, construction costs are high, and it is difficult to assess students for these costs.... Furthermore, the Newark colleges will carry a major part of the state's responsibility for the education of the disadvantaged, which is also expensive. Therefore, any proposal for higher education in Newark must ensure that the necessary resources flow to the colleges."

FROM THE REPORT OF THE STATE COMMISSION TO STUDY THE MISSION, FINANCING AND GOVERNANCE OF THE COUNTY COLLEGES ENTITLED, "EXCELLENCE AND THE OPEN DOOR: AN ESSENTIAL PARTNERSHIP", (MARCH, 1979):

"OPEN ACCESS

"The Community Colleges should continue to be the open door to higher education for the entire population of New Jersey.

"The open access concept is reflected in an admissions policy that permits any person who has a secondary school diploma or equivalent, or who is eighteen years of age, to enroll in a program consistent with his or her abilities and interests.

"In implementing this concept, the community colleges have extended access to groups whose needs and abilities were previously underserved by higher education. These individuals, often termed 'non-traditional' or 'new' students, include those attending part-time day or evening classes because they are employed full-time; professionals who return to school to meet increased skills or licensing requirements; senior citizens; handicapped persons; those requiring bilingual programs; adults 25 and older; educationally disadvantaged individuals; and those returning to school for personal growth and self improvement....

"There has been considerable controversy in New Jersey over standards in the primary and secondary schools. The Commission believes that, whatever standards might be imposed upon students emerging from the secondary schools, entrance to degree programs in community colleges should be based upon their criteria, and where necessary, their assessment of basic skills competency....

"In setting standards, the community colleges should establish realistic requirements for entry into various programs and reasonable progress requirements. The latter are also important in remedial or developmental courses where the ultimate objective is entry into regular educational programs. These requirements should not operate as barriers to access, but should serve to ensure the admission of prepared students capable of fully participating in a program of study."

FROM THE 1981 5-YEAR PLAN OF THE NEW JERSEY BOARD OF HIGHER EDUCATION:

"The community colleges should continue to be the low tuition, open access institutions to higher education

in New Jersey with a particular obligation to people who are uncertain about their educational interests or abilities and want to explore a variety of occupational and academic programs.... Their special focus should be on academic transfer programs, career or occupational programs, remediation and basic skills, adult and continuing education, career counseling, public and community service, and teaching rather than research....

"Community colleges are the open door to higher education in New Jersey. In public higher education this mission shall be reserved for the county community colleges. These institutions have a responsibility to admit to an occupational, academic, or remedial program any motivated person who has the potential to benefit from post-secondary education and is a high school graduate or holds a high school equivalency diploma, or, if not in high school, is eighteen years of age or older....

"The community colleges should continue to be the open door to higher education in New Jersey by providing training in skills proficiencies and the first two years of a college level education to the broadest cross-section of society. They should continue their policies of open admission and low cost tuition. In order to achieve their enrollment goals, the community colleges should:....

"augment the social goals of open admission by actively recruiting minority, disadvantaged, non-traditional, adult and handicapped students through efforts to increase their awareness of the opportunities for the benefits of further education...

"provide strengthened and expanded remedial and developmental programs to permit under-prepared students to gain competencies in the basic skills."

• While we note this continuing emphasis on the role of developmental or remedial programs stressing competency in basic skills as articulated time and again by the State Board of Higher Education's reiterated commitment to open door policies for community colleges, we should also note the results of a major study published just last month by the Center for Public Resources in New York entitled, 'Basic Skills in the U.S. Work Force'.

With support from the Ford and Charles Stewart Mott Foundations, and

corporate grants from AT&T, the Prudential Insurance Co., and the Gannett Co., CPR organized a task force of leading corporate executives and public educators to conduct a national survey of business, labor, and public education.

"Among the findings were the following....

"School systems appear to have underestimated the importance of basic (academic vs. vocational) skills for successful employment of students entering the work force....

"Two-thirds of the companies and most unions [surveyed] noted that basic skills deficiencies limit the job advancement of employees....

"In hiring a new employee, business has a 'human resources concept', thinking perhaps of a 35-year investment in the individual. School systems seem to educate only for the 'first job', rather than for long-term viability of the individual in the working world....

..."The linkages among economic growth, workforce employability, and worker productivity are tightly forged. Basic skills competency is a common factor in the linkage."

Thus, we can see that the emphasis of the Board of Higher Education on the need for community colleges to stress basic skills is in accord with American business interpretation of today's job market needs.

Turning now to the particular relationship between the City of Newark and Essex County College, I wish to emphasize the extraordinary contribution Newark taxpayers provide for the health and welfare of E.C.C.

Based on records of Newark's Central Planning Board and Tax Assessor's Office, we note that E.C.C. is now headquartered on more than six blocks and five streets of Newark's prime real estate. The properties E.C.C. acquired to construct its campus had an assessed valuation of \$2,593,350 in 1968. Were these properties still yielding tax revenue last year, Newark would have realized nearly \$262,500 in vitally needed revenue; in the absence of

local property taxes, Newark has lost approximately \$3.6 million in potential revenue since the properties were acquired for the new E.C.C. campus.

In addition, E.C.C. was formerly headquartered at 31 Clinton Street beginning in 1965 when that property was assessed at \$1,438,200. Newark has not received one penny of tax revenue from that property since then. Were the property still yielding tax revenues last year, Newark would have realized \$145,545 in vitally needed revenue; since 1965, Newark has lost nearly \$2.3 million in potential tax revenue from that property.

What we can derive from these figures is the fact that the citizens of Newark have contributed approximately \$5.9 million to Essex County College over and above our annual contribution of 17.10% of the Essex County budget--and those contributions will continue year in and year out.

When Essex County College was established and the decision was made to locate the campus at the County's hub, here in Newark, we were told that the loss of our homes and businesses, the loss of considerable tax revenues, and the extra burdens placed on our police, fire, sanitation and other services would be compensated by the opportunities Essex County College, with its open access mandate, would provide our residents.

In regards to the report submitted by President Yamba to the Newark Municipal Council called "a compilation of data", there is basic information lacking about several points, none of which are clear from the data thus far presented. For example:

How many E.C.C. students are high school graduates and in which program are they placed and are they full-time or part-time students?

What are their respective attrition rates and what are the apparent causes?

What precisely are the new criteria which would be used in order to exclude students E.C.C. is now mandated to serve? How would the application of these criteria affect the balance between E.C.C.'s different programs and how would they diminish E.C.C.'s proper emphasis on mastering basic skills? How would it affect Newark high school graduates seeking entry to E.C.C.?

Finally, let us also note that even as we press to keep the doors of E.C.C. open as they should be, we also commend the E.C.C. staff and Board on their efforts to upgrade standards for curriculum and for graduation. We do not consider these positions inconsistent; only the myopic or bigotted would think so.

All we ask is for Newark students to be guaranteed a chance for a college education. Once they gain entry, it is up to them to make the most of the opportunity.